

TO: Board Members

THROUGH: Kevin Patteson, Executive Administrator
John Steib, Chief Deputy Executive Administrator
Robert E. Mace, Ph.D., P.G. Deputy Executive Administrator, Water Science and Conservation
David Carter, Manager, Contracting and Purchasing

FROM: Brenner Brown, Management Analyst

DATE: November 14, 2013

SUBJECT: Research and Planning Funds for Rio Grande River Needs Assessment Study

ACTION REQUESTED

Authorize the executive administrator to negotiate and execute a research contract with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers not to exceed \$15,000 from the Research and Planning Fund to support studies of the Rio Grande in Texas under the Rio Grande Environmental Management Program.

BACKGROUND

The Rio Grande has long provided essential water resources to a large area of Texas. The Rio Grande Basin includes territory in Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas as well as Mexico. Through the Rio Grande Salinity Management Coalition area water managers, the Rio Grande Compact Commission, and water user groups from Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas have been working cooperatively to develop solutions to concerns regarding the quantity and quality of the water delivered to the state of Texas. In 2009 the New Mexico Environmental Department, the Interstate Stream Commission, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed the first phase of a Water Resources Development Act Section 729 Rio Grande Salinity Management Program which included a geospatial salinity database, a U.S. Geological Survey Rio Grande Salinity Assessment Study, and a Rio Grande Economic Impact Assessment study.

In conjunction with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the State of New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission the Texas Water Development Board is engaged in completing the second phase of the Rio Grande Salinity Management Program.

Our Mission

To provide leadership, planning, financial assistance, information, and education for the conservation and responsible development of water for Texas

Board Members

Carlos Rubinstein, Chairman | Bech Bruun, Member | Mary Ann Williamson, Member
Kevin Patteson, Executive Administrator

Under Section 22 of the Water Resources and Development Act of 1974, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is authorized to assist states in the preparation of comprehensive plans for the development, utilization, and conservation of water and related resources of drainage basins, watersheds, or ecosystems located within the boundaries of such state.

KEY ISSUES

Water quality and quantity issues within the Rio Grande are impacting water supply throughout the Rio Grande Basin in Texas. Due to a multitude of factors ranging from increased population, prolonged drought, increased industrial and agricultural use, and huge growth in petroleum development in the Rio Grande Valley effective management of the waters of the Rio Grande is more challenging than ever.

A key element in meeting the needs of those dependent on the waters of the Rio Grande is gaining a thorough understanding of what these needs are. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has presented the states of Texas, Colorado, and New Mexico with the opportunity to be a part of a needs assessment study of the entire Rio Grande from the river's headwaters to its mouth where it enters into the Gulf of Mexico. New Mexico and Colorado have both signed on as participants in the study.

The product from the study will be a Needs Assessment Report. This assessment will further the work of the Coalition by identifying strategies aimed at improving water quality, increasing and conserving water supplies throughout the basin, and ecosystem restoration. In order to ensure that this effort does not conflict with our regional planning process, staff will direct Corps efforts in Texas to use work already done by the Far West Texas, Plateau, and Rio Grande regional water planning groups to focus strategies on water quality solutions and/or ecosystem restoration.

This report will potentially identify a wide range of water resource needs throughout the entire Rio Grande Basin from the headwaters in Colorado to the Gulf of Mexico. It will also provide recommendations and design strategies to meet the basin-wide needs; and provide preliminary cost estimates as well as a five year timeline for implementing strategies to address basin wide water resources needs. The total cost of the study is \$90,000, with \$45,000 in matching funds from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers complementing \$15,000 each from Texas, New Mexico, and Colorado if the Board agrees to cooperate.

Funding of implementation of identified strategies through cost-share with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is dependent on reauthorization of funding for the Rio Grande Environmental Management Program. If this funding source is not available nonfederal sponsors will have the opportunity to fund the identified projects locally.

At the earliest, the study could begin in mid to late December, but it is more likely to begin in early January of 2014. The current schedule calls for a total of 150 work days to complete the study. The bulk of the work will be completed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with input from all sponsors and stakeholders throughout the process.

Staff has been advised that this project will not conflict with ongoing litigation with New Mexico.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of this item.

This recommendation has been reviewed by legal counsel and is in compliance with applicable statutes and Board rules.

Les Trobman
General Counsel